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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3524
INFO RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY 0215

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MOSCOW 011241

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/03/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ENRG](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: YOUR MOSCOW VISIT FOR CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA
CONSULTATIONS

REF: A. MOSCOW 5415

[1](#)B. MOSCOW 11079

Classified By: Amb. William J. Burns. For Reasons 1.4(b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) We welcome your visit to Moscow as a chance to engage the GOR face-to-face on sensitive regional issues and begin to chip away at Moscow's misconceptions about U.S. intentions in the region. It is a commonplace assumption that Moscow's policies in Central and South Asia are fueled by a perception that U.S. gains must come at the expense of Russian interests. Competition -- for political influence, economic dominance and control of resources -- often drives Moscow's foreign policy thinking. Russia can do much to slow down or hinder U.S. efforts in the region. The hardest part of your talks will be the difficult but necessary process of beginning a conversation with Moscow about regional cooperative strategies that encourage stability and economic prosperity benefiting all, including Russia.

THE GOR TEAM

[1](#)2. (C) Your two primary interlocutors -- DFM Grigoriy Karasin and DFM Aleksandr Alekseyev -- are both consummate diplomats; they are highly professional, candid, and know their briefs. Karasin, who served as the MFA's spokesman in the early nineties and came to his position in 2005 after serving as Ambassador to the UK, is responsible for Russia's bilateral relations with CIS countries. Karasin has been point man at the MFA since Russia redoubled its efforts to assert its interests in Eurasia, particularly in Central Asia, following the color revolutions. While you will find Karasin a lively interlocutor, he is likely to be preoccupied by the ongoing crisis in Georgian-Russian relations, which has been exacerbated by the recent spy scandal. In contrast to Karasin's broader experience, Alekseyev is a South Asia expert who served as Russia's Ambassador to Pakistan in the mid-nineties and to the OSCE until two years ago. He also serves as Russia's representative to the Six Party Talks. Alekseyev has been tapped for an ambassadorship in Europe, but this is not yet official. Presidential Counterterrorism Envoy Anatoliy Safonov is a former DFM who had also served in the security services; he has been an energetic proponent of counterterrorism cooperation in the Foreign Ministry. Drug Tsar Viktor Cherkosov (who we hope you will be able to meet)

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is also a member of the so-called "siloviki," an informal group of senior intelligence and law enforcement officials who are close to the Kremlin. He was named by Putin to his post in 1995 to reinvigorate a lagging drug enforcement effort.

CENTRAL ASIA

13. (C) While the color revolutions were a blow to Russian prestige, Moscow has focused on rebuilding ties to Central Asian elites and has managed to achieve some tactical success. Russia feels confident it has a good hand, and will seek to build on its existing advantages -- proximity and institutional/personal ties that date back to the Soviet period -- to preserve Russia's unique influence in the region. Moscow often seeks to reinforce existing elite attitudes in Central Asia that view an emerging civil society and resultant pressures for human rights and political empowerment as an existential threat. You are likely to hear from Karasin that Russia seeks stability in the region, but our perceptions differ widely over what stability would look like. Russia sees it as a static phenomenon and fears that U.S. efforts to promote democratization will lead to turmoil on Russia's borders and the accession to power of Islamist governments.

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ENERGY

14. (C) Any discussion about energy will soon run up against firm Russian perceptions that developing the region's energy resources is a zero-sum game. Countering this mentality will be a hard slog but a good start would be to convince the Russians to move forward on a clear win-win -- Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) expansion (ref B). The Russians have complicated the expansion decision by linking it to the construction of the Burgas-Alexandroupolis (BA) Bosphorus bypass. Russian participation in BA would be substantial with GazpromNeft, Rosneft, TNK-BP (all oil companies) and Transneft (the state-owned oil pipeline operator) all expected to take part. According to Chevron (one of the main shareholders in CPC and a major Kazakh oil shipper), they would participate in a BA pipeline but only if CPC expansion

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gets done because, without expansion, BA is not economic. Further, while in Athens recently, Putin apparently tasked Transneft to make the BA pipeline happen, thus setting the stage for a broader CPC/BA deal that would significantly increase Kazakh oil volumes reaching the Mediterranean and on to world markets. Russia also has growing concerns about competition with Beijing, reflected in disquiet about China's recent gas development and pipeline deal with Turkmenistan.

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REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

15. (C) While Russia has been less than transparent about the workings of the specialized regional organizations it uses to bolster its influence in Central Asia -- recall last year's call by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization for a timetable for U.S. withdrawal from Central Asian military bases -- Karasin is likely to stress to you that the groups are not directed against U.S. interests. Moscow, however, faces a difficult time trying to win regional buy-in for these organizations which have so far accomplished little beyond politically symbolic gatherings of the region's leaders. Russia's partners in the Collective Security Treaty Organization seem to view the group as little more than a vehicle to keep Moscow placated, and there is little to suggest that the SCO will evolve into something that can guarantee security solely on Moscow's terms. At the same time, Russia has been intensely suspicious about U.S. efforts to encourage regional links, exemplified by its opposition to the May regional counternarcotics and security conference held in Dushanbe. Your meeting is an opportunity to underline that our goal in supporting integrated regional approaches is not to squeeze Moscow out but to bring more partners in to work on transnational problems.

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COUNTERTERRORISM AND COUNTERNARCOTICS

16. (C) Our bilateral cooperation on counterterrorism issues is handled through the Counterterrorism Working Group headed by Under Secretary Burns and DFM Kislyak. Presidential Envoy Safonov has played an active role in the CTWG and has provided continuity on the Russian side. The CTWG, which met last month in Washington, is focused on spurring working-level contacts by focusing on specific tasks in an Action Plan. On specific threats, Karasin will likely reiterate long-standing Russian concerns about cross-border incursions of reconstituted Taliban elements into Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. He may also flag worries that Hizb ut-Tahrir is making inroads in Central Asia and may be intermingling with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Beyond urging greater efforts to suppress the Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan, Karasin's policy prescription will be to urge U.S. cooperation in forming "security belts" that will protect the Central Asian states from disorder in Afghanistan. On narcotics trafficking, your interlocutors will stress the need for more strenuous efforts to combat flows from Afghanistan -- which have exacerbated drug abuse problems in Russia itself -- while also highlighting the connection between terrorists and illicit narcotics trafficking. If you meet with Cherkesov, he's likely to tout Russia's cooperation with Central Asian states in Operation Kanal -- but this semi-annual event under CSTO auspices seems much more a law enforcement concept than an actual unified operation.

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AFGHANISTAN

17. (C) Karasin and Alekseyev will both underline Moscow's growing concerns about the upsurge in Taliban/al-Qaida activity that began this spring. While Russia has never been particularly supportive of President Karzai, he is still viewed as better choice than any of the alternatives. That does not mean that you will not hear strong criticism of Karzai -- for sidelining Russia's clients while not effectively reining in Pashtun warlords. Moscow does have a positive agenda in Afghanistan, highlighted by Russia's agreement in July to reconcile outstanding debt and its reiteration of a commitment to forgive 100 percent of debt in the Paris Club, which could be finalized later this month in a meeting of the Finance Ministers. Alekseyev told us in late June that Moscow continues to look for investment opportunities in Afghanistan, with resolution of the debt issue as removing a significant obstacle to further economic cooperation.

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PAKISTAN AND INDIA

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18. (C) Moscow's relations with Islamabad have never been particularly good, but we have detected an interest in improving relations with Pakistan. Alekseyev, as Moscow's man in Islamabad in the nineties, has noted that lingering stereotypes on both sides will make that difficult. Regardless of good intentions, Russia continues to fear that Pakistan is not doing enough to suppress the Taliban and will likely cite Musharraf's North Waziristan peace agreement to question Islamabad's commitment to the fight. On India, Alekseyev will most likely focus on prospects for the adoption of the nuclear agreement, given Russian interest in Tarapur and a renewed push by the nuclear industry here to build more atomic power plants overseas. In general, links with India remain strong, but Russia now seems to be struggling to reposition its ties to take account of India's rising political status and growing economic capacity. As government-to-government economic ties dwindle and India turns to others for defense technology, Moscow will likely seek to strengthen energy, scientific and technological ties and promote India's enhanced role in the UN.

BURNS